

THE GULL



GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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APRIL 2005

FOUNDED 1917

Wetland Restoration Project May Take Tough Choices

Imagine you are a Western Sandpiper that has migrated from Alaska's Copper River Delta to the salt ponds of South San Francisco Bay. You have just flown nonstop at 40 miles per hour over a distance of 1,900 miles. During your 42-hour flight, you have lost up to 80 percent of your usual 1-ounce body weight. When you arrive, nearly exhausted, in the South Bay, you have one thing in mind—feeding—and you do just that up to 18 hours a day.

Western Sandpipers are among the one million shorebirds that visit San Francisco Bay every year, 75 percent of them setting down in the South Bay salt ponds. Some spend the winter; others migrate through. All rely on the ponds for survival. Eared Grebes, Wilson's Phalaropes, and other species that have adapted to life in high-salinity waters also depend on the salt ponds. Newly fledged California Least Terns head for the salt ponds when they leave the Alameda Wildlife Refuge, surviving on small fish that inhabit the ponds.

At the same time, California Clapper Rails and Salt Marsh Harvest Mice, both on the brink of extinction, desperately seek out a home in San Francisco Bay's tidal wetlands. And a meager home it is, since nearly 90 percent of the bay's 200,000 acres of historic wetlands have been lost.

Much of this loss occurred through conversion of tidal wetlands to salt ponds by the simple mechanism of building levees around shallow tidal wetlands. The tidal marsh vegetation died out and left a flat, shallow body of water, perfect for evaporation and salt production. Lost were tidal wetlands that are among the most productive ecosystems on earth. Seventy-five percent of fish species depend on wetlands during their life cycle. Wetlands clean our water and air, moderate our climate, and, in general, help sustain life on earth.



American Avocets in the South Bay.

© Mark Rauzon

WETLAND RESTORATION, continued on page 12

Protecting a Wildlife Corridor

Looking at a map of the East Bay, you can see that Highway 24 bisects north and south Contra Costa County. If a mountain lion or coyote in the southern part of the county wants to go to the northern part to roam or mate, the six-lane-wide highway is an insurmountable obstacle. For the mountain lion or coyote, and for many other species, the only safe passage between north and south is the Caldecott Wildlife Corridor. This small band of land, most of which is in public ownership, lies on top of the highway's Caldecott Tunnel.

We were surprised, therefore, to read a land-use proposal released by the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) that threatens the Caldecott Wildlife Corridor with recreational development. EBRPD plans include building a 300-person campground and 60-car parking lot, improving existing or constructing new roads, and installing parking lots for new trails on new parklands that EBRPD is adding to the Sibley Regional Preserve, which lies just south of Highway 24. The campground would be sited in an abandoned quarry.

We are certainly not opposed to new trails in the corridor, but allowing 300 people to camp near the corridor invites a massive increase in day use and a new, large nighttime use of an EBRPD regional preserve that is managed primarily for its natural resources, including wildlife. Encouraging people to experience and appreciate nature is important, but not at the expense of nature itself.

CORRIDOR, continued on page 4

INSIDE

3 Leora Feeney **5** Programs **6** Field Trips **10** Backyard Birder





ROSTER

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. Monthly meeting: second Friday in the West Bay; third Thursday in the East Bay, 7 p.m.

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Upcoming Board Elections in May

The 2005 annual election of Golden Gate Audubon Board of Directors will be held by written ballots due on May 16, 2005. A ballot form with a proposed slate of three new directors and instructions for voting is printed on page 11. PLEASE VOTE!

The GGA board consists of 17 directors: 9 elected by GGA members and 8 designated by the elected directors. The three new elected directors will fill slots being vacated by John Luther, Miles McKey, and Allan Ridley, whose terms expire in June.

The proposed slate of new elected directors is Judith Dunham, an active GGA member who has participated in census counts at Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Park for six years and is currently co-editing *The Gull*; Elizabeth McNamee, who joined the GGA board as a designated director in November 2004 (see December 2004 *Gull*) and is chair of the Development Committee; and Jenn Rosenberg, a designated director and chair of the Volunteers Committee, who has been an active volunteer for GGA for more than a year, working in the office and organizing Restore-a-thon events.

Grant Funds Wetland Restoration

Golden Gate Audubon has received a \$30,000 grant from the Nature Restoration Trust, a joint project of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and PG&E. The grant will support GGA's restoration work in the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Shoreline, a 71-acre wetland complex that is contiguous with San Leandro Bay, Arrowhead Marsh, and San Leandro and Elmhurst Creeks in Oakland.

All of the restoration work will be done by East Oakland elementary school students and community members, under the guidance of GGA staff and in close collaboration with East Bay Regional Park District staff and restoration specialists.

The students and community members are participants in Golden Gate Audubon's Eco-Oakland Program, a year-round, intensive education program in East Oakland schools that combines in-class curriculum with hands-on learning and environmental restoration. As part of the program, students and adults will remove invasive plants and restore native plants in the MLK Shoreline watershed to revive habitat for birds and other wildlife, as well as to improve bay water quality.

The MLK Shoreline is home to roughly 5 percent of the world's endangered California Clapper Rails. Endangered Brown Pelicans and California Least Terns forage in its waters. The complex is also a critical Pacific Flyway migratory stopover and hosts one of the most significant shorebird and waterfowl populations in the central bay.

Enhance Your Library at the May Book Sale

Over the years, Golden Gate Audubon has been the grateful recipient of numerous ornithological books, field guides, and journals. We now find that some titles in our library are duplicates and others are rarely, if ever, used by staff or members. We are offering these publications for sale on Friday, May 13, 1-5 p.m., and Saturday, May 14, 1-4 p.m., at the GGA Office, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley. Proceeds from the sale will help fund GGA's ongoing education and conservation programs.

Among the more than 300 items are important works by such well-known authors as Roger Tory Peterson, Arthur Cleveland Bent, Joseph Grinnell, and Arthur Skutch. If you are planning a trip, you'll want to check out the many bird finding and field guides for destinations around the world, from Monterey Bay, California, and Churchill, Canada, to the Galapagos, Ceylon, and Africa.

Leora Feeney, Dedicated Golden Gate Audubon Activist

If anyone personifies "longtime activist," it is surely Leora Feeney. Leora has been a leading member of Golden Gate Audubon for more than 30 years and has served on the board of directors longer than she can remember. She has devoted the past 25 years to saving endangered California Least Terns and has spent more than a decade striving to create a permanent home for terns in the proposed National Wildlife Refuge at the former Alameda Naval Air Station. She founded (and still chairs) Golden Gate Audubon's Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge (FAWR) Committee.

As a GGA volunteer in the early 1970s, Leora helped organize Save Our Shoreline, a group of Alameda residents who wanted to guarantee promised public access to the water and a shoreline trail on Bay Farm Island. Today, the trail from the Otis Street Bridge to the Oakland International Airport is a popular walking and bicycling pathway and part of the San Francisco Bay Trail. Leora recalls that the struggle to convince the Bay Farm developer and city of Alameda to create the trail took three years. "I've learned since that this was a brief battle," she says with a sigh.

Leora also counted shorebirds in the 1970s with another ardent GGA conservationist, the late Elsie Roemer, who devoted her life to saving wildlife and wetlands in Alameda. Leora led a successful campaign to have Elsie's favorite marsh at the end of Broadway in Alameda named in her honor.

Recalling this effort, she says, "This hot spot for Clapper Rails and thousands of shorebirds was not appreciated by everyone, since it collected ulva, or sea lettuce, an algae that can cause sulfide smells in late summer. Elsie, who was in her 90s, objected to having the marsh named in her honor, and I had to convince her that we needed

to give it some status or we might lose it. We

hoped that creating the Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary would counter the seasonal complaints, and it seems to have worked!"

Symposium Inspires Wildlife Refuge

In 1994 Leora took on her current mission: to protect one of the most important California Least Tern nesting sites at the soon-to-close Alameda naval base. To garner support, she and GGA Conservation Director Arthur Feinstein organized a symposium at the College of Alameda on biological resources at the naval base. The symposium featured presentations from top specialists in Least Terns, Brown Pelicans, harbor seals, and San Francisco Bay fisheries research. Their papers provided valuable and little known information on the Least Tern's unique and critical population in Alameda, as well as the importance of central San Francisco Bay to wildlife that relied on fisheries. As a result of the symposium, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) requested that 565 acres of the naval base be transferred to its jurisdiction for a national wildlife refuge. Leora has been working ever since to achieve transfer of the land from the navy to the USFWS to create the refuge.

"Our symposium was such a success," says Arthur Feinstein, "because 11 scientists gave their time freely, not only for the wildlife but because of Leora. She is the single most inspiring person in conservation I have ever known."

Leora earned her bachelor's degree in biology at California State University, Hayward, at the same time she was doing volunteer conservation work for the California Department of Fish and Game. With her degree, she started her own business providing biological surveys and consultation for mitigating habitat losses, relocating sensitive animals, and monitoring the animals' success or failure.

Over time, however, she says, "I found myself complicit in habitat loss and failure to maintain the lives of fragile ani-



John Luther

Leora Feeney at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge.

mal populations, and I finally chose to stop working in this business."

In 1997 Leora went back to school to attain a California teaching credential, allowing her to switch careers. She now works with federal and Alameda County inmates, preparing them for tests to obtain a General Education Degree (GED), the equivalent of a high school diploma. "I'm much happier doing bird surveys as a volunteer and helping mostly very unfortunate people get a little education," she says.

If you don't see Leora at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge on weekends doing bird surveys or preparing the Least Tern nesting area for the coming season, you may find her playing the violin in performances with the University of Holy Names Orchestra. "Music of all times and cultures is another of my passions," she says. "My granddaughter is learning the violin, and there is nothing that gives me more satisfaction than playing duets with this six-year-old."

When Leora was asked recently if she wanted to sign on for another term as a GGA director, she said, "Yes, you'll never get rid of me." We at GGA can only hope that's true!

by Marjorie Blackwell,
Publications/Publicity Chair

The Friends of Alameda Wildlife Refuge (FAWR) Committee meets the third Monday of every month at 7 p.m. at Alameda Point Building 1, Room 140. For information, contact Leora Feeney at leoraalamed@att.net.



The importance of the corridor has long been recognized. In 1995 a team of resource agency and county planning experts, including representatives of the EBRPD, established the Caldecott Corridor Committee. In 2001 the committee issued a Resource Management Plan (RMP) stating that the Caldecott ridge serves as "the only significant habitat linkage or wildlife corridor between the remaining large, isolated patches of open space in the central East Bay" and is "a linchpin in the future survival of many wide-ranging species and a key factor in maintaining balanced ecosystems in the East Bay."

Species identified as most dependent on the corridor were mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, and gray fox. The RMP states that if the corridor linkage were lost, the northern East Bay mountain lion population would cease to exist, and that this might be true for every terrestrial vertebrate in the central East Bay. Other species that rely on the corridor are the Alameda Whipsnake and the Red-legged Frog, both federally listed as threatened species.

The RMP advised that management of the corridor "should be performed cautiously and carefully as factors influencing wildlife movement through the corridor are not well understood and human disturbances can be counter-productive." Land managers, the RMP stated, should "minimize human impediments to wildlife...(such as fences, structures, and roads)" and "avoid significant changes to the area." We believe that creating a 300-person campground constitutes a "significant change."



Red-legged Frog.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Spring Birding in New York

May, when birds are migrating north and returning to their breeding territories, is the ideal time to be in New York City. More than 30 warbler species have been recorded at this time of year, along with many of the 400 other species observed in the metropolitan area.

From April 30 to May 5, Alan Hopkins will lead a trip to three of New York's premiere birding hotspots: Central Park in Manhattan, Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Queens, and Prospect Park in Brooklyn, location of the Boathouse Audubon Center. Cultural attractions, including a tour of the American Museum of Natural History, are also part of the trip's itinerary. Participants will stay on Manhattan's Upper West Side and travel in a comfortable minicoach. Cost of the trip is \$1,095 per person in a shared room; the single supplement is \$775. Participants pay for their own airfare.

This is the perfect trip for anyone who wants to visit New York City. For a full informational package and itinerary, call Alan Hopkins at 415.664.0983.

How You Can Help

Golden Gate Audubon has joined with many other conservation organizations in opposing the new EBRPD land-use plan. Please write the EBRPD Board and ask them to retract this proposal and prepare a new one that has much fewer impacts to the Caldecott Wildlife Corridor. Address your letter to President Beverly Lane and Board Members, East Bay Regional Park District, 2950 Peralta Oaks Court, P.O. Box 5381, Oakland, CA 94605.

by Arthur Feinstein, Conservation Director

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education and member activities!

Golden Eagle (\$1000 or more)

Mrs. Joyce E. Davis (*MLK Education Program*), Beryl Ness (*Working Assets*), I. von der Hude

Peregrine Falcon (\$500 to \$999)

Diane Ichiyasu, Mary E. Schaefer

Least Tern (\$200 to \$499)

Mary Betlach, Autumn Garrett & Andreas Meisel, Patricia Gotchall, Caroline Kim & Bruce De Benedictis

Clapper Rail (\$100 to \$199)

Mark Anderson & Kimberlee Stryker, Robert & Barbara Brandriff, Michael Butler, Jim Clarke, John Conley, Ed Cullen, Grace Busche Dafoe, Kathy

Down, Caroline A. Erickson, Dorothy D. Gregor, Theresa & Richard Horrigan, Robert & Connie Hosemann, Ellen Hughes, Larry Jacobs, Blair & Kathy Jarrett, John Langdell, Mrs. Charles Lowrey, Catherine S. Lyon, William McCoy, Helen McKinley, James & Marilyn Murdock (*United Way of Lane County*), Catherine S. Muther, Geraldine S. Nathan, Carol Pacht, Kristine Poplawski, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Riddell Jr., Pepi Ross, Mr. & Mrs. J. W. Sindall, Bev Spurgeon, Melvin & Carolyn Webber, Anna Wilcox

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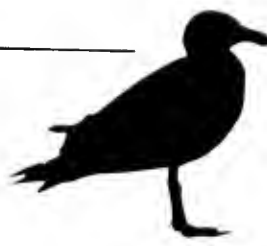
David C. Haase, Hadley Haden-Guest, Carol L. Hanson, Leah Hess, Barbara Job, Herbert Jorritsma, Elizabeth Kaska, Bonnie Killip, Dr. Jessica Krakow, Donald Lim, John B. Lowry, Douglas Macmillan, Mrs. Rose Martin, Mary K. McConnon, John & Marilyn Muenchow, Karen & Sam Naifeh, Alexandra Petrich, Vivian Pon, Suzanne F. Pope, Lindsay Ralphs, Marlene Sakol, Daniel Salas, Michael Sanchez (*Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign*), Terrye Satin, Ruth Sayre, Carol Soto, Richard O. Sproul, Charles Stanberry, Bill Stewart, Elizabeth E. Strong, Nola Theobald, David J. Thomas, Mary Ann Thompson, Rachel Watson-Clark (*Clorox Company Foundation Employee Giving Campaign*), Irene Watt, Sondra Zentner

In Memory of

Morgan Harris (*Edward L. and Mildred J. Bennett, George H. & Kay C. Bloom, Elaine and Arnold Grossberg, William & Claudine Read, Clarence & Carol Weinmann*)

PROGRAMS

Anne McTavish



Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., healthful, delicious snacks are served by hospitality coordinator, Susanne Shields. (All utensils, cups, and plates are made from corn, wheat, soy, and sugarcane by-products, and are compostable and break down in landfills in three weeks.) If you would like to suggest food and drinks for meetings or would like to help, call Susanne at 415.810.4900, or email susannekshields@yahoo.com. For information about upcoming events, detailed directions, or updates, see www.goldengateaudubon.org/Chapter/programs2005.

Trinidad and Tobago

San Francisco

Friday, April 8

Bob Stewart

Bob Stewart will preview his fourth trip to Trinidad and Tobago, planned for June 23 to July 5, 2006. His slide presentation will focus on the birds, birdsongs, butterflies, and flowers of the islands. The famed Asa Wright Nature Centre on Trinidad is surrounded by tropical rain forest that supports 400 species of birds, more than 600 butterflies, and 108 mammals. Mornings are birdsong extravaganzas. Meals are authentic African-Indian. Field trips, led by experienced naturalists, include a chance to observe eight-foot female leatherback turtles laying eggs in the sand.

Trinidad, located just seven miles from Venezuela, also has an interesting history. It was ruled by the Spanish, French, and British. Emancipation of African slaves occurred in 1833. Steel bands emerged in 1845, independence from England came in 1962, and the first president of Trinidad was elected in 1976.

Bob Stewart has led hundreds of field trips introducing participants to Bay Area birds, plants, and butterflies and has also led tours to other western U.S. destinations and to Central America. He is the author of *Common Butterflies of California*, illustrated with his own color photographs.

County Fair building, Strybing Arboretum,

Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way

Directions: www.strybing.org/visiting/page2.html

The Miracle of Restoration

Berkeley

Thursday, April 21

Arthur Feinstein

Join Golden Gate Audubon Director of Conservation Arthur Feinstein for a fascinating exploration of the challenges and rare successes of wetland restoration.

Positive results

of wetland
restoration at

Martin Luther

King, Jr. Regional

Shoreline Park have

been demonstrated

by a recently completed five-year bird census. Golden Gate Audubon volunteers, who conducted monthly census counts at the park for the past five years, recorded high numbers of water birds using the newly restored habitat. Golden Gate Audubon played a leading role in this project, which created 37 acres of new tidal marsh, 14 acres of seasonal wetlands, and 20 acres of associated uplands. Arthur will illustrate the project's success with slides of birds.

Arthur also will show slides and discuss the difficult decisions that must be made in one of the most ambitious wetland restoration projects in the United States: 15,000 acres of salt ponds in the South Bay. Arthur is part of a stakeholder group guiding decisions. (See page 1 for a description of this project.)

Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin)

Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.html



Heron Watch at Stow Lake

Each year since 1994, Great Blue Herons have returned to Stow Lake in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park to court, mate, and raise their young. A total of 71 chicks have fledged during this time, and this year, there are four active nests.

Come and observe the Great Blue Herons and their chicks at Stow Lake on Saturdays from April 16 through May 21. Between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., San Francisco Nature Education interns will have spotting scopes set up to view these magnificent birds. A naturalist will lead nature walks around Strawberry Island from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Follow signs from Stow Lake Boathouse to the observation site. For more information, go to www.sfnature.org or call 415.387.9160.

June Birding Classes

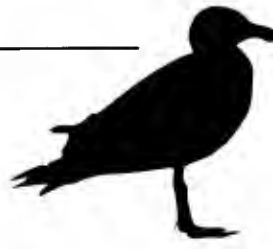
Birds of the Sierra will introduce participants to the warblers, flycatchers, and other species found in the Sierra Nevada through lectures and field trips. The class has two sections, the first taught by Rusty Scalf and Bob Lewis, the second by Michael Butler and Bob Lewis.

For section one (\$55), the lecture will be held at Albany High School on June 7, followed by a four-day Sierra field trip starting June 9. Section two (\$65) will also have four days in the Sierra, beginning June 16. The lecture will be held during the trip at the San Francisco State Sierra campus. The higher fee for section two includes one dinner.

Registration deadline is May 9. For more information, visit <http://home.comcast.net/~rlewis727/NewClasses.html#Su1>. To register, go to the Albany Adult School web page, www.Albany.k12.ca.us/adult, or to the office, 601 San Gabriel Avenue, Albany (510.559.6580).

FIELD TRIPS

Susan Groves



small bills and quarters or use credit/ATM card, and purchase round-trip tickets. Allow time to get ticket processed and bicycle to platform.



Lake Chabot Park

Alameda County

Saturday, April 2

Leader: Emily Serkin, 510.481.1168,
eserkin@girlsinc-alameda.org

Meet at 8:30 a.m. The trip will focus on improving everyday birding skills by paying attention to details of visual and behavioral field marks. A good assortment of common birds should be present, and seeing courting behavior of Great Blue Herons and Red-tailed Hawks is possible. Trip ends at noon. Heavy rain cancels. Beginners welcome.

Take I-580 east to San Leandro. Exit Dutton/Estudillo Ave. Turn left at second light, which is Estudillo. Road becomes Lake Chabot Rd. and curves to right; take a left at this point to stay on Estudillo. Drive straight into park. Meet at first parking area.

Birding for Children

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Saturday, April 2 and May 7

Leaders: Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis, San Francisco Nature Education, and Darin Dawson, San Francisco Botanical Garden docent, 415.387.9160, www.sfnature.org

Meet at 10 a.m. for this first Saturday of the month trip at the kiosk/bookstore near main gate of San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum, Ninth Ave. at Lincoln Way. See February *Gull* for details.

Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Sundays, April 3 and May 1

Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241, and Ginny Marshall 650.349.3780

For this regular first Sunday of month half-day trip, meet at 8 a.m. at front gate of arboretum, Ninth Ave. and Lincoln Way. See December *Gull* for details.

Wednesday at Arrowhead Marsh

Oakland

Wednesday, April 6

Leader: Courtenay Peddle, 510.532.8911
(no calls before 9am), capeddle@there.net

Meet at Arrowhead Marsh parking lot at 9:30 a.m. to study and enjoy wintering birds. For details, see February *Gull*. For directions, see April 29 Arrowhead trip.

Bicycle Trip: Redwood Shores—Foster City

San Mateo County

Saturday, April 9

Leader: Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233
(no calls after 9pm), call for cell number,
kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 8:45 a.m. at Belmont Caltrain Station or 9 a.m. at Island Park (near Belmont Sports Complex just north of Marine Pkwy.) in Belmont. We should find birds on bay, lagoons, lakes, and sewer ponds. This circuit is a flat 20-mile loop on Bay Trail and other bike paths, mostly paved, some on bike lanes on city streets. Trip continues to mid-afternoon. Bicycle helmet required. Dress in layers, and bring lunch and liquids. Rain cancels. All levels of birders and bicyclists welcome.

By car: From Hwy. 101 in Belmont, exit at Ralston/Marine Parkway. Go east toward bay .4 mile, then left at first light east of freeway and continue left. Park in signed parking area of Island Park near Belmont Sports Complex.

By BART and Caltrain: Leave Rockridge BART at 7:10 a.m., MacArthur at 7:14, Embarcadero at 7:30, arriving Millbrae at 8:12. Take bicycle up in elevator; purchase round-trip Caltrain ticket from machine. Take bicycle down different elevator to west side of Caltrain tracks to await southbound train arriving at 8:24. Use northernmost car (rear of train) reserved for bicycles. Train arrives Belmont at 8:43. You may also board train departing at 8 a.m. from Caltrain station at 4th and King in S.F. Northbound train departs Belmont at 2:48 p.m., arriving Millbrae at 3:08 and S.F. at 3:36. A Pittsburg/Bay Point train leaves Millbrae at 3:19, arriving Embarcadero at 3:58, MacArthur at 4:16, and Rockridge at 4:19. Have

Lake Merritt

Oakland

Saturday, April 9

Leader: Travis Hails, 510.451.1207 (no calls after 9 p.m.), travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at 8 a.m. for this monthly trip at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue Sts. Focus will be on waterfowl and water birds of Lake Merritt. Beginners welcome.

Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

Tuesday, April 12

Leader: Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001,
rlewis0727@aol.com

Meet at 8 a.m. at Nature Area parking lot. We will look for returning migrants such as warblers, vireos, Allen's Hummingbird, and Black-headed Grosbeak. Trip lasts two to three hours. Beginners welcome.

By bus: Take #67 at downtown Berkeley BART (departs 7:12 a.m. and 7:42 a.m.), which takes 12 minutes to arrive at Spruce/Grizzly Peak Blvd. intersection. From there it is a 10-minute walk downhill to Nature Area parking lot.

Pt. Reyes National Seashore 17th Annual All-Day Birding Blitz

Marin County

Saturday, April 16

Leaders: Leon Abrams, 510. 843.4107,
leonabrams@earthlink.net, and Cathy
Purchis Catpur@value.net

This fast-paced, noncompetitive, multi-habitat trip covers Five Brooks Pond area, Limantour Spit, Drakes Bay, Fish Docks, and other parts of Pt. Reyes, ending at Bear Valley, producing approximately 100 species. Meet at 8 a.m. at Five Brooks Trailhead parking lot, approximately 3.5 miles south of Olema on west side of Hwy. 1. Bring water and food, and wear layered clothing for variable weather. Cosponsored by GGA and National Park Service.

[\$]

Bicycle Trip: Stevens Creek Trail, Mountain View Shoreline, and Palo Alto Baylands

Santa Clara County

Saturday, April 16

Leader: Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233
(no calls after 9pm), call for cell number,
kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 9:15 a.m. at Mountain View Caltrain Station on W. Evelyn Ave. in Mountain View. We should find many species on bay, ponds and sloughs. This is one of best birding areas on San Francisco Bay. Much of trip will be on paved trails and designated bike lanes, with some on gravel and some on roads. No hills. Any rain but very light cancels. Bicycle helmet required. Dress in layers, and bring lunch and liquids. All levels of birders and bicyclists welcome.

By car: From Hwy. 101 in Mountain View, exit on Moffett, go 1 mile west (away from bay) just past Central Expressway, turn left/south on W. Evelyn Ave., and go a short distance to Caltrain Station.

By train: S.F. Airport/Millbrae train leaves Rockridge BART at 7:10 a.m., MacArthur at 7:14, and Embarcadero at 7:30, arriving Millbrae at 8:12. Take bicycle up elevator and purchase Caltrain round-trip ticket from machine. Take bicycle down different elevator to west side of Caltrain tracks to await southbound train arriving at 8:24. Use northernmost car (rear of train) reserved for bicycles. Train arrives Mountain View at 9:14. Train also departs at 8 a.m. from Caltrain station at 4th and King in S.F. Northbound train departs Mountain View Caltrain station at 2:19 p.m., arriving Millbrae at 3:08 and S.F. at 3:36. Northbound there is direct access from Caltrain to BART; no elevator needed. Pittsburg/Bay Point train leaves Millbrae at 3:19, arriving Embarcadero at 3:58, MacArthur at 4:16, and Rockridge at 4:19. Have small bills and quarters, or use credit/ATM card, and purchase round-trip tickets. Allow time to get ticket processed and bicycle to platform.



Condor Watch 2005

Pinnacles National Monument

Saturday, April 23

Leaders: Bob Risebrough, 510.549.2476,
pelecanus@igc.org; Hans Peeters

Meet at Bear Gulch Visitor Center at 8 a.m. Several of us will be staying at campground, and participants arriving on Friday are invited to join us from about 4 p.m. There will be potluck dinners and beverages at

our campsite both Friday and Saturday evenings. For details such as campground info and directions, see *March Gull*.

Mitchell Canyon

Contra Costa County

Sunday, April 24

Leaders: Michael Butler, 510.684.3375,
mjbk1@earthlink.net, and Pamela Llewellyn
925.413.8329, pllewellyn@kleinfelder.com

Meet at 8:30 a.m. for this half-day trip. We will see an excellent variety of warblers, vireos, and flycatchers, and perhaps Lazuli Bunting and Western Tanager. Past highlights have been nesting Western Wood-pewee and Cooper's Hawks, as well as Golden Eagle and Phainopepla. Bring fluids and sunscreen, and wear good walking shoes. Beginners welcome.

Take Hwy. 24 through Caldecott Tunnel to Walnut Creek and exit Ygnacio Valley Rd. Go approximately 8 miles, then turn right onto Clayton Rd. After 1 mile, turn right onto Mitchell Canyon Rd. and continue to end of road into official parking lot.

[\$]

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

Wednesday, April 27

Leaders: Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066;
Travis Hails, 510.451.1207,
travishails@yahoo.com; Ruth Tobey,
ruthtobey@earthlink.net

Meet on lake side of Nature Center on Bellevue Ave. at 9:30 a.m. See February *Gull* for details and directions.

Arrowhead Marsh Family Trip

Oakland

Friday, April 29

Leader: Rene Urriola, 510.938.8016,
rene25@gmail.com

Meet at 3:15 p.m. in front of lookout structure at Arrowhead Marsh. This new,

monthly trip is for families who want to learn about Arrowhead Marsh birds and work on restoring bird habitat. Kids of all ages are welcome. Trip will be conducted in Spanish and in English. Bring binoculars if you have them. Binoculars will also be available. Trip will end around 5 p.m.

Take I-880 to Hegenberger exit, then go west on Hegenberger to Doolittle Dr. Turn right on Doolittle, then right onto Swan Way and left into MLK, Jr. Regional Shoreline Park. Drive to end for Arrowhead Marsh parking lot.

Mines Road

Livermore Area

Saturday, April 30

Leader: George Bing, 925.443.5868

Meet at 8 a.m. in parking lot of Nob Hill Shopping Center. (Center is still there; Nob Hill grocery is out of business.) We can expect to see Bullock's Oriole, Lewis's Woodpecker, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and Phainopepla. Bring food and liquids. Participants have option to continue with group until dark.

Take I-580 east and turn right on North Livermore exit. Continue south for 2 miles to Nob Hill Shopping Center at South Livermore and Pacific. From there, we will caravan on mountain roads to I-5. Because of very limited parking along roads, carpooling is strongly recommended.

Yosemite's Bird Life

Yosemite National Park

Friday-Sunday, June 3-5

Leaders: Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,
davequady@att.net, and Bob Lewis

In early June, Yosemite National Park is alive with singing birds in breeding plumage. The park's lower and middle elevations support a diversity of bird life, typically including seven flycatchers, three vireos, and seven warblers. This trip, which will cover a variety of habitats, is limited to first 20 participants who sign up. For details, see February *Gull*.



Contact Susan Groves, Field Trips Committee Chair, at 510.654.5954 or susangroves@att.net:

- if you can share a ride or if you need a ride,
- if you have difficulty reaching a leader and need information,
- if you have suggestions for trips, or
- if you are interested in leading a trip.

key

Carpool

[\$] Entrance fee required

Biking trip

OBSERVATIONS

February 1–28, 2005
Bruce Mast



February provided plenty of lessons in advanced gull ID for those willing to invest the effort to learn. CBRC review species were distinguished at both coastal and south bay locations. Otherwise, February was a somewhat slow month for Bay Area rarities. Despite the gathering signs of spring, migration was still limited primarily to some early swallows and *Selasphorus* hummingbirds. Most rarities were winter hold-overs. Typifying that pattern, the Common Blackhawk (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) continued in north Stockton, SJ, where it has been seen sporadically since at least November.

Loons to Ducks

The SF Red-necked Grebe remained anchored all month off Crissy Fields while a SON bird fished the boating channel at Bodega Bay through the 9th (KA; DH). On Feb. 8, a Short-tailed Shearwater ventured within scoping view along Ocean Blvd. in Moss Beach, SM (RST). The Pelagic Cormorant remained at Shoreline L., SCL, through the 19th (mob). A couple White-faced Ibises at Meadowview Dr., SOL, lifted birding spirits on an otherwise rainy Feb. 21 (JRo, CO, FO). Reports of Greater White-fronted, Snow, Ross's, and Cackling Geese were still common, though numbers were way down from January. Observers reached consensus on 3 Trumpeter Swans (*Cygnus buccinator*), 2 adults and 1 juvenile, that plied the waters of Nicasio Res., MRN, Feb. 8-20 (ADM, RS; mob).

A male Eurasian Green-winged (Common) Teal at Arrowhead Marsh, ALA, remained through the 20th. A couple Eurasian-American hybrids were also reported in SM at Bayfront Park (RF) and Nob Hill Market in Redwood Shores (RST). Redheads were concentrated on Salt pond A2W, SCL, where up to 93 were tallied through the 9th (AE; mob). A couple also made it to Aquatic Park in Berkeley, ALA, on the 16th (ES). February duck

tallies for the region included 5 Tufted Ducks, 3 Harlequins, and 4 Long-tailed Ducks. Barrow's Goldeneye reports were down to 3 birds from 2 locales. Hooded Mergansers retained their strong regional presence and concentrations of Red-breasted Mergansers continued at Aquatic Park, ALA, (JuS; MRi, JRy) and Rodeo Lagoon, MRN (WL). A scattered flock of 5-10 Red-breasteds made an unusual visit to L. Merritt, starting the 23rd (TH, HP; mob). The L. Merritt Hooded x Goldeneye cross kept pulling up shellfish throughout the month (TH; mob).

Raptors to Alcids

On Feb. 12, a juvenile Bald Eagle graced the skies over Sutro Forest and Cole Valley, SF, before soaring off to the NE (PS). As in January, Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagles, Merlins, Peregrine and Prairie Falcons were all widely reported. Rail watchers again returned to Waldo's Dike, MRN, for high tide on Feb. 7 but the lower tides and more limited access resulted in just 2 sightings (JRy). The SOL

Mountain Plover flock shifted south to a field along Canright Road, where up to 200 birds maintained winter quarters through the 9th (DC, TF, GW; JS). Wandering Tattlers were noted on the 12th and 14th at Dumbarton Bridge, ALA, and at Cliff House, SF, respectively (DE, BF). A single Ruddy Turnstone visited Miller-Knox RP, CC, on the 12th (BP, mob) and up to 12 remained at Coyote Point, SM, through the 26th (AE; mob). The Feb. 6 GGAS trip to Hayward RS, ALA, discovered a solo Red Knot at Frank's Dump (PL, MBu, mob). A Rock Sandpiper joined the Surfbirds and Black Turnstones foraging on the rocks below Bodega Head at Bodega Bay, SON, Feb. 9-26 (DH; Sch).

Solo Pomarine Jaegers were spotted along Ocean Blvd. in Moss Beach on the 8th (RST), beyond Seal Rocks, SF, on the 19th (BF) and from Merrie Way, SF, on the 21st (BF). The 2nd year Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*), first discovered Jan. 13 among the massive gull flock at Venice Beach in Half Moon Bay, SM, was rediscovered on the 20th (AJ; mob). Regular flock scrutiny confirmed the ongoing presence of several Glaucous Gulls and turned up an intriguing Herring Gull that suggested the Vega race from Siberia (SH, RT, AJ; oob). Equally intriguing, a 2nd winter gull with features indicative



Red-necked Grebe

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

of Kumlien's Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) was picked out of the Thayer's flock at Hidden L. in Milpitas, SCL, on the 22nd, where it remained through the remainder of the month (AJ; mob). Those desiring a more certain ID will need to travel to Newfoundland. Elsewhere around the Bay, 6 Glaucous Gulls were tallied at PRNS Lighthouse, MRN, on the 9th (SW) and another remained at DENWR, SCL, through the 17th (MM; mob).

Doves to Thrashers

In SCL, a Greater Roadrunner appears quite at home at Alviso Marina, where it took up residence several months ago (MM; mob). Four Burrowing Owls were recorded at ALA and SCL locales. Ed Levin CP, SCL, remained the sole Bay Area location to report a Long-eared Owl, which stuck to its Elm Picnic Area roost through at least the 22nd (mob). Several short-eared Owls were visible from the mouth of San Lorenzo Creek at Robert's Landing, ALA, Feb. 6-9 (ES). The Williamson's Sapsucker abandoned the College of San Mateo this month but, in compensation, a female Williamson's frequented San Jose's L. Cunningham in Feb. 11-26 (KB; mob). According to BB, there are just 2 records of Williamson's Sapsucker in SCL. Also in SCL, a first-winter male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker lingered all month at Hidden Villa (GH; mob). On the 9th, a Yellow-bellied was a 1-day wonder at a private residence near China Camp, MRN (FA).

On Feb. 2, an early Hammond's Flycatcher caught the eye of birders at L. Solano Campground, SOL (SG, FO). A Yellow-billed Magpie wandered to Olompali State Historic Park in Novato, MRN, on the 13th (NF) and 2 more maintained their outpost at the India Basin boat yard, SF, through the 25th (ASH, HC; mob). Also unusual for SF, 2 Western Bluebirds showed up in the Presidio on the 9th and graciously contributed to county lists throughout the month (MZ; mob). On Feb. 6, a Townsend's Solitaire dropped in at Henry Coe State Park, SCL, along Mahonney Ridge Road (JY). Yet another SF rarity, a Wrentit skulked around Bayview Hill Feb. 12-19 (CDL; mob).

Wood Warbler Sightings

Nashville Warbler			1/31-2/12	Miller-Knox RP, CC	JE; mob
2/6	Chain of Lakes, GGP, SF	TO	Palm Warbler		
1/6-2/6	Glen Canyon Park, SF	DA; SR, SA	2/12	Dumbarton Bridge, ALA	DE
2/5-6	L. Merced, SF	MB; DA	2/16	China Basin Channel, SF	ASH
2/20	Middle L., GP, SF	AW, MWE	2/11-22	Huffaker Park, Mission Bay, SF	DA; mob
1/10-2/7	Pine L., SF	PMC; DVP, JRy	2/3-27	L. Merced, SF	BH; CDL
Yellow Warbler			2/14	Mission Creek, SF	BF
1/9-2/13	Pine L., SF	MB; mob	1/25-2/21	Redwood Shores, SM	RST
Magnolia Warbler			Cerulean Warbler (<i>Dendroica cerulea</i>)		
1/1-2/22	Pine L., SF	mob	2/10	Yountville, NAP	TF
Black-throated Gray Warbler			Northern Waterthrush		
2/18-26	Aquatic Park, Berkeley, ALA	BP; HH, KR, JRy	2/16	Charleston Rd., SCL	BRe

Abbreviations for Observers: DA, David Armstrong; FA, Fran Alvarez; KA, Ken Archibald; SA, Stefanie Arthur; BB, Bill Bousman; BrB, Brian Bullick; KB, Kim Blythe; Michelle Brodie, MB; MBu, Michael Butler; DC, David Coursey, HC, Hugh Cotter; JC, Josiah Clark; ADM, Al DeMartini; GD, Gary Deghi; MD, Mike Day; PD, Peggy Don; DE, Daniel Edelstein; AE, Al Eisner; ArE, Art Edwards; JE, Jules Evens; MWE, Mark Eaton; BF, Brian Fitch; MF, Mike Feighner; NF, Neil Fogerty; RF, Rich Ferrick; TF, Tim Fitzer; TFa, Tina Fabula; SG, Steve Glover; ASH, Alan Hopkins; BH, Bob Hall; DH, David Hofmann; GH, Garth Harwood; HH, Hugh Harvey; SH, Steve Howell; Sch, Scott Hoppe; TH, Travis Hails; AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo; PK, Patrick King; PL, Pamela Llewellyn; CDL, Calvin Lou; RLe, Rick Lebaudour; WL, William Legge; DM, Dan Murphy; PMC, Pat McCulloch; MM, Mike Mammoser; CO, Carmen Oliver; FO, Frances Oliver; KO, Kris Olson; TO, Trent Orr; BP, Bob Power; HP, Hilary Powers; BRe, Bob Reiling; JRo, Jim Rowth; JRy, Jennifer Rycenga; KR, Karen Rosenbaum; MR, Mark Rauzon; MRi, Matt Ricketts; MRo, Mike Rogers; SR, Siobhan Ruck; JS, Jim Steinert; JuS, Judi Sierra; PS, Paul Saraceni; RS, Rich Stallcup; RSt, Ron Storey; ET, Ed Tanov; RT, Ryan Terrill; RST, Ron Thorn; FV, Frank Vanslager; AW, Adam Winer; GW, George Waldie; SW, Semo Whitecloud; JY, James Yurchenco; MZ, Matt Zlatunich;

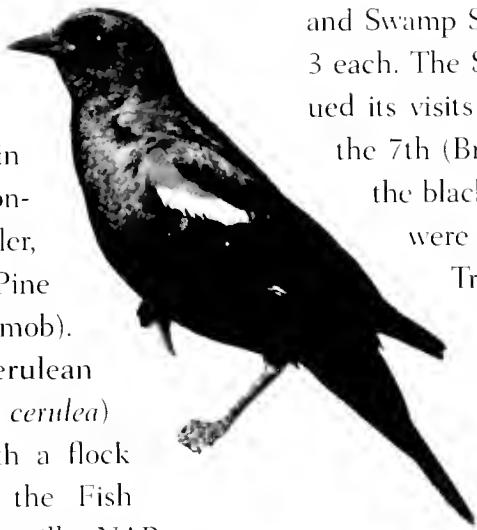
Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers, "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listserve; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions.

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; BBA, Breeding Bird Atlas; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CC, Contra Costa; CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station; Cr., Creek; Cyn., Canyon; DENWR, Don Edwards SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge; GGP, Golden Gate Park; L., Lake; MRN, Marin; N., North; NAP, Napa; NSMWA, NAP-SON Marshes Wildlife Area; OSP, Open Space Preserve; Pt., Point; PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; RP, Regional Park; Rd., Road; Res., Reservoir; RS, Regional Shoreline; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SJ, San Joaquin; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant

Wood Warblers to Finches

SF birders noted at least 8 warbler species in Feb., including the continuing Magnolia Warbler, which hung out at Pine L. through the 22nd (mob). On Feb. 10, a male Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) reportedly took up with a flock of Yellow-rumpeds at the Fish and Game office in Yountville, NAP (TFa). Five overwintering Western Tanagers provided local highlights in SF, SM, and SCL.

On the 3rd, a Chipping Sparrow wandered north to a Sonoma, SON feeder (RLe). Wintering Chippies are more common in SoCal. The Feb. 8 high tide again flushed the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow from its salt-marsh digs at Arrowhead Marsh, ALA (PK; mob). White-throated

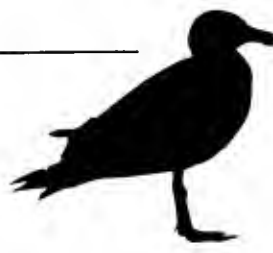


and Swamp Sparrow reports were down to 3 each. The SON Harris's Sparrow continued its visits to a Sonoma feeder through the 7th (BrB; mob). Careful students of the blackbird flocks at L. Merced, SF, were rewarded with a couple female Tricoloreds through the 5th (PS; DM, AW).

The SF Orchard Oriole was last reported from the L. Merced boathouse on the 2nd (HC; mob). A couple immature Bullock's Orioles frequented Pine L. through the 13th (ASH, HC; mob) and a bright orange male made camp at Mountain L. Park, SF, Feb. 14-27 (JC; DA). Five locations tallied Red Crossbills, the largest flock being 76 birds reported from Monte Bello OSP, SCL (GH; KO). Finally, a small flock of Lawrence's Goldfinches remained in residence at Monte Bello OSP, SCL, through the 14th (PD; GH).

BACKYARD BIRDER

Meg Pauletich



The value of bird counts is underappreciated by many who enjoy birding. As the longtime leader of one area of the annual Christmas Bird Count, I can't help but notice trends and differences every year. My group and I expect, or at least hope, to find the same birds in the same locations every year. This happens quite often. Birds fly, but they are also creatures of habit, showing up because of food sources, habitat preferences, and other needs. About 20 years ago, I moved about a half mile away. Over the decade, the species and their numbers have changed so subtly that I did not realize the shift until recently. So it's worth the effort to have regular counts in order to detect trends.

Looking back over Christmas count records, which go back to 1984 for our area, is revealing. For example, we never saw a Common Raven until 1994, and for a few years after that we saw none. Then in 2004 we counted 11. American Crows first showed up in 1988, when we counted 9. There were 20 the next year, then none until 1993. What happened to attract them all of a sudden? It has been speculated, and is probably true, that these corvids used to hang out mainly in rural areas. Because farmers tilled the land and planted crops, there was no shortage of food. Gradually, farmland in the eastern Bay Area counties was sold, and housing was built on it. The adaptable crows and ravens moved into suburban areas, which they found to their liking, especially since there was no shortage of food.

Some species move about in wintertime to take advantage of foods such as berries. The 2004 count was a very low year in numbers of American Robins. My group wasn't the only one to notice this. Several readers of Gary Bogue's column in the *Contra Costa Times* remarked that suddenly, in February, their yards were teeming with robins and

Cedar Waxwings (completely missing on our count day). One morning my yard was filled with the sweet sad songs of many robins. They stayed for three days, gorging on the purple ivy berries on my lattice fence. Then they were gone as quickly as they had appeared. Obviously they were roving around searching for just the right ripe fruits.



American Dipper.

Most insect-eating birds, such as flycatchers, head to warmer climes for the winter and then reappear with spring's big burst of bugs. The Black Phoebe stays behind, cleaning up the insects that overwinter. There doesn't seem a shortage of these handsome birds so they must find enough to sustain them. Other insect eaters, like wrens, broaden their diets to include berries and fat-rich seeds along with suet you might provide for them.

Like me, many birders are fond of the small, flocking birds such as Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Bushtits, and Chestnut-backed Chickadees. Always on the move searching for a meal, they benefit by associating together to scout and scour trees for food.

Golden-crowned Kinglets use this flocking strategy for another purpose. These

tiny birds overwinter in northern forests where temperatures drop far below freezing. Weighing less than two pennies, they lose heat much faster than larger birds and are in danger of losing more energy during the night than they could gain back during the day. Bernd Heinrich, in the June 2003 *Wilson Bulletin*, writes of finding two groups of kinglets in the tops of spruce trees in Maine. The birds were tightly huddled together throughout the night. By turning their tails outward and tucking their heads into their feathers, they reduced the surface area exposed to the cold and thereby greatly lessened their heat loss. In a sense, they turned themselves into a single, larger bird. During the day the kinglets ate as long as it was light, but when the sun went down, they quickly looked for their buddies and settled in for the night. Wrentits are also known to huddle together. Other small birds seek refuge from the winter cold in groups inside nest boxes or tree holes.

The Christmas Bird Count is like a yearly treasure hunt. I'll never forget the only time we saw an American Dipper in the San Pablo Creek. Every year we had looked longingly at the creek and pictured a dipper. Then in 1984, it was bitterly cold and icy even at our elevation. There, in the creek, was a dipper. Obviously the cold had tempted the bird to visit the Bay Area, where the weather was balmy by comparison to the temperatures in its mountain home.

Numerous other species are elusive every year: California Thrasher, California Quail, and Varied Thrush, to name a few. We are lucky to find Wood Ducks every count, but we never know which species will be present in scant numbers or which will set records. That is the thrill of participating in a regular count.

The 2004 Oakland Christmas Bird Count had more participants than ever before. I hope you feel inspired to join one of the many Christmas counts in the United States or try the Cornell Lab's Great Backyard Count held every February. Think of it as giving science a hand. The more eyes we have out there, the more birds we will see.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Did you know Golden Gate Audubon, a chapter of National Audubon Society (NAS), is an independent organization with its own separate budget? We receive less than \$3 of your \$20-plus NAS membership — which does not begin to cover the cost of producing the *Gull*, managing our extensive conservation and environmental education programs in San Francisco and the East Bay, and offering field trips, classes, and monthly slide-lectures. If you join Golden Gate Audubon *directly* you will have the satisfaction of knowing that 100 percent of your Supporting Membership helps to support our *local* programs.

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GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION MAIL BALLOT

The 2005 election for the membership to choose 3 new Directors for the Golden Gate Audubon Board of Directors will take place by written ballot. The Board Development Committee, with the approval of the board, has nominated the candidates listed below.

Golden Gate Audubon members in good standing may vote by completing and signing the form of ballot printed below and returning it to the Golden Gate Audubon Office, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702, by the **ballot deadline of May 16, 2005**.

Thirty-five ballots are needed to meet the quorum requirement of the Golden Gate Audubon Bylaws.

BALLOT FOR ELECTION OF GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON DIRECTORS

Ballots received by the **May 16, 2005**, ballot deadline will be counted in accordance with the choice specified for each candidate.

Director Nominee

Term Ending

Yes

No

Elizabeth McNamee

2008

☐

☐

Jenn Rosenberg

2008

☐

☐

Judith Dunham

2008

☐

☐

Member Name

Member Signature

In March 2003, the federal and California state governments took a huge step to restore tidal wetlands by purchasing more than 15,000 acres of Cargill Salt's South Bay salt ponds. The South Bay wetland restoration project is one of the largest such projects in the United States. It is restoration with a capital R!

But what about the Western Sandpiper, the California Least Tern, and many other species that depend on the salt ponds? If all of the Cargill ponds are returned to tidal marsh, these birds will face a grave new threat.

There are other serious issues. The Cargill levees provide a degree of flood control for the entire South Bay. How will flood protection be ensured? Will mercury, found in sediments of the bay, be released into the food chain? Many of the salt ponds have subsided and, if opened to the bay, would become more bay instead of tidal marsh. Studies suggest there is not enough sediment washing into the bay from upstream

sources to fill the salt ponds and raise their elevations. In this case, newly opened salt ponds may rob mud from adjacent mudflats where shorebirds feed at low tide.

How do we resolve these issues and develop a project that meets the original concept of restoring the bay to a healthy state? The answer is called the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. Its goals are to "provide a mosaic of habitat types (including some salt ponds), insure adequate flood management, and increase opportunities for wildlife-oriented public access and recreation in the South San Francisco Bay."

An elaborate planning structure has been created to achieve these goals. It is headed by the California Coastal Conservancy and the two new owners of the salt ponds, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game. Two teams of distinguished scientists are advising the project. A consultant team will develop a



plan based on the scientists' recommendations. A 28-member stakeholder forum, on which I serve, consists of representatives of local governments, flood control districts and other agencies, and the public.

The forum's job is to help define the project's goals and identify species and habitats that need attention. One of my major efforts is reminding the planners that California Least Terns use the salt ponds for foraging and that sufficient salt ponds (now called managed saline ponds) are needed to sustain the shorebirds and other species that depend upon them.

There is goodwill on all sides and a strong desire to succeed, but "playing God" is a tough task. If we fail, some species may disappear or suffer drastic population reductions. If we succeed, San Francisco Bay will have a glorious rebirth. Wish us luck!

by Arthur Feinstein, Conservation Director

Arthur will give an illustrated account of the South Bay wetlands restoration project on April 21 in Berkeley (see Programs, page 5). For more information, please visit www.southbayrestoration.org.

**WELCOME
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The GULL is the official newsletter of Golden Gate Audubon Society. As a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon, you receive a subscription to *The GULL*, a 10 percent discount on all items purchased at our nature store, and the satisfaction of supporting local conservation efforts. Local members of the National Audubon Society are encouraged to join Golden Gate Audubon directly. Contact our office at 510.843.2222 for details.

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